

Total Eclipse of the Heart by MitchRNoose

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Cheating, Christmas Party, F/M, Friends to Lovers, Idiots in Love, Jopper

Language: English

Characters: Bob Newby, Dustin Henderson, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Karen Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Ted Wheeler, Will Byers

Relationships: Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Joyce Byers & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers/Bob Newby, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper, Joyce Byers/Lonnie Byers

Status: Completed

Published: 2021-06-25

Updated: 2021-07-07

Packaged: 2022-03-31 11:30:32

Rating: Mature

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 3

Words: 8,582

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

After the aftermath of Series 1, Joyce is eager to settle down and get back to normal life.

But when Jim drops by to suggest she attend his precinct's Christmas party, tension arises between Hopper and Bob.

Who will Joyce pick?

I think we all know...

1. All out of love

Author's Note:

First Fic I've ever written!

Hopefully I can get the other two chapters done as quickly as possible, though I am quite a perfectionist. Comments are always appreciated, and of course Kudos too!

Enjoy the first chapter.

(P.S. All chapter titles are names of 80's songs that I love.)

*(I'm lying alone with my head on the phone,
Thinking of you till it hurts.
I know you hurt too but what else can we do,
Tormented and torn apart.) - Air Supply*

1983 - December

Life with Bob Newby was all in all perfect.

She and the boys had grown accustomed to his presence in their lives, and more recently their home, as the two had started dating. The household dynamic had shifted from what it once was, due to Will's disappearance to the Upside Down, but Bob provided the kind of normalities that the family missed; film nights in particular.

Things had been tense and traumatic after Jim Hopper had helped Joyce retrieve Will, she had felt like all the eyes in Hawkins were fixed upon her with pointed stares and criticism - not that she cared much. At this present moment, she was just glad to not have to worry about her walls opening up and her lights flickering.

Jonathan had decided to come back home that evening instead of staying with Nancy and suggested that it would be the perfect time to put Will's new video player into good use. It was a nice model, one Joyce had refused to even attempt to tinker with; she left the men to get the movie set up. Kicking back her feet and tousling her already

crazed hair, she settled down to enjoy Blade Runner with a glass of whiskey. The boys sat amongst a range of pillows on the floor whilst she and Bob opted for the couch, her head resting against his chest and his arm wrapped lovingly around her petite frame.

"Have you seen this yet? It came out last year." Bob muttered, keeping his voice down as it began.

"I haven't had much time to go to the cinema lately."

That was true, though she failed to mention that Demigorgons and a child with superpowers were the real reason she hadn't had much time for trivialities over the past year. She had thought it best to keep Bob in the dark about the recent events. The more people that knew; the more problems arose - she and Hopper had agreed that this was something to keep quiet about. She would tell Bob eventually, but all in good time.

"Are you working tomorrow?" He inquired.

"I'm always working the register on Mondays, but I should be done by fo-"

"-Mom, stop talking over the movie," Will shot her a look over his shoulder, though it held no malice behind it.

She mimicked a zipper over her mouth and shared a small knowing smile with Bob, bringing her hand up to his cheek and pulling him in for a brief kiss. His grip around her tightened minutely and she let out a sigh of comfort, nestling in closer to his side.

He had been such a rock in her life over the past few months. Where she may have previously looked to Hopper for comfort - their long friendship was always something she could count on - Bob had turned up unexpectedly, after working in San Francisco for a while as a technician, and the two had instantly struck a close bond. He had invited her out for coffee one early morning - she could hardly refuse. Joyce found herself inviting him along to meals, social gatherings, and her house more and more often, resulting in the two of them deciding to just make it official. Joyce was happy to see that most people took their coupling well, though she didn't miss how Jim had bristled when she mentioned their involvement. Brushing it off as

nostalgic protectiveness, she didn't think much of it.

Though she never expected to begin a relationship with the man, she was definitely in a much better place mentally and her sons noticed it. Will, ever the loving and friendly child, had instantly grown close to Bob, though Jonathan took a little longer. She supposed that was Lonnie, her exes, fault. The number of times Jonathan had been awoken by his parents screaming at one another, or sometimes physically fighting, had taught him to be cautious and on guard with all the men in Joyce's life. She could tell that Jonathan liked him though, who wouldn't?

The film outlasted Joyce's energy and she groaned slightly at being awoken by the rest of her family getting ready for bed. Bob cradled her against his side as he led her down the hallway and into her room, laying her down gently on the bed and pulling the covers up to her chest. He had spent the night once or twice and she was prepared to feel him settle next to her, though instead he just pressed a kiss to her temple and pushed a few stray hairs from her tired face.

"I'll make sure Will is in bed."

He didn't expect a response, softly padding out of her room and closing the door with a faint click. She smiled to herself at just how lucky she felt - she had finally found the right guy. Sleep took her quickly.

Joyce awoke to a cold bed. She wasn't sure why Bob hadn't joined her but she assumed he must've gone home. She could hear the sounds of Jonathan and Will eating breakfast, the light clatter of cutlery against crockery, a pleasing noise to wake up to. She hoped that Bob hadn't slept on the sofa, she would never want him to feel like he couldn't be with her, though that was just how Bob was. A Gentleman.

Her momentary pondering was interrupted by a truck pulling up outside the house and a sharp rap on the front door. Hearing Will's small footsteps rushing to open it, she tossed the covers back and threw on her silk robe that hung on the back of a nearby chair. She could tell who it was already.

"Heya Chief" Jonathan's voice became clearer as she exited the bedroom.

She was met with the sight of Hawkins Chief of Police, Hopper, tousling her youngest's hair and giving Jonathan a fond slap on the shoulder.

"Hey, boys, your mother around?"

Out of habit, he readjusted the beige, wide-brimmed hat to sit more comfortably on his head and swivelled when Jonathan nodded to his Mom who was just about to voice her presence.

"Hop?" She smiled up at him, a little unsure as to why he was at their house at 8:00 in the morning. There was a glint in his eyes as he caught his first glimpse of her, giving her a once-over, though it diminished quickly and was replaced by his familiar stern gaze. She briefly scanned the room for any sign of Bob but evidently, her previous thoughts were true. He must've needed to get home for an early shift at the Radio Shack.

"Joyce... I, uh. News." Hopper rubbed the back of his neck.

"You want some coffee?" She brushed past him into the kitchen where she began to get two mugs out.

"Yeah sure," His knee-jerk reaction was to reach for the pack of Marlboro in his breast pocket. The combination of caffeine and smoke was a pleasant and regular taste in the Chief's mouth. With adept fingers he withdrew a cigarette and placed it between his lips, offering one to Joyce.

"Can't stay too long, I actually came here to tell you about that annual Party thingy that's happening down at the precinct,"
He lit the fag, took a long draw, and placed the pack back in his

pocket when she shook her head. She had been trying to quit for the last couple of months. “Did Karen tell you about that?”

“No, I don’t think she did,” Joyce confirmed as she set the water to boil.

“Is that like a Christmas thing?” Will spoke up from the table that he and Jonathan now sat at.

“Yeah... yeah it’s kinda Christmassy I guess, but you don’t have to dress up or anything. There’ll probably be some music n’ that but nothin’ special kid.” Jim spoke slowly, pausing to exhale a large plume of smoke.

“I’ve actually been told to invite some people, thought you lot might enjoy it, Flo has been wanting this whole event to be a bit bigger than it has been in the past... she’ll have half the town comin’ at this rate.” He sighed, rolling his eyes.

“Oh, Mom please can we go!” Will’s enthusiasm made the Chief laugh, his eyes connecting with Joyce’s to register her opinion.

“Sounds lovely Hop, when is it?”

“Saturday evening.”

“Well, I don’t see why not.” She smiled lovingly at Will, pouring the coffee granules into the boiling water and mixing with milk. She glanced at the calendar that hung on the refrigerator; the party was five days from then, leaving her enough time to get a new dress. She had thrown out a lot of her old clothes when she divorced Lonnie, eager to get rid of the memories that each garment held. It wasn’t as if she was particularly bothered about her appearance, but she supposed this occasion might be a nice time to get a bit fancy with her wardrobe. She passed one of the cups of coffee to Hopper’s outstretched hand. He took a sip, groaning.

“Oh goddamn, that’s just what I needed.” He revelled in the flavour.

“Make sure Bob knows about the party,” Jonathan remarked, placing his dirty plate on the kitchen countertop and heading towards his room to get dressed for work. Will, walkie-talkie in hand, scampered

off to his room too as he noticed the conversation shifting away from his interest.

“I’ll tell him when he swings by Melvalds,” Joyce noticed how Jim’s face soured slightly at her words, despite his efforts to hide it.

She stepped towards him placing a hand on his bicep, her eyes looking up at him hopefully.

“Hey...” Her thumb rubbed idly over the sleeve of his shirt, “Look, I know you’re not a big fan of Bob, but he’s been here for me and he means well.”

A muscle in the Chief’s jaw ticked in annoyance but he brushed it off quickly and smiled at her. It didn’t reach his eyes. His much larger hand covered hers, giving it a gentle squeeze as he placed his cup down on the nearby table.

“I’ll see you later.” He adjusted his hat again and briskly exited the house. Joyce let out a sigh, noticing how little he had actually drunk of his coffee, and, as the engine of his Blazer started up, she began clearing away breakfast.

Joyce stood at the cash register, lost in thought. Hopper’s evident problem with Bob had ticked her off. After the traumatic previous events in the year, all she wanted was some peace and quiet and if Jim wanted to act like a big man-child then she wanted nothing to do with it. Her irritation had begun when, after their brief conversation that morning, he began avoiding her like the plague.

She had seen him pass by Melvalds in his truck, toing and froing between the Police Department and the places he was called to be on duty for, but whenever she glanced his way he would act like she was invisible. It was just infuriating and totally out of the blue.

This continued on for most of the week; Joyce attempting to talk to him by either calling his work phone or catching his attention in

person, but he always had some petty excuse. “*Sorry, I don’t have time,*” “*I’m needed at work,*” “*Not right now.*” She just didn’t understand why he had such an issue with her boyfriend. It wasn’t as if Bob was a horrible guy! In fact, he was quite the opposite. What if it wasn’t even about Bob? Had she said something to hurt him? She wished he would just open up, though Joyce knew Hopper wasn’t that kind of guy. He never had been.

She was shaken from her thoughts as she saw said policeman stride by the store, looking like a man on a mission and, in a moment’s decision, she decided that the shop would be ok for a few minutes without her. Nobody had even been in for the last hour and a half, so she took off after him; the shop-front door letting out a harsh, protesting squeak as she swung it open with force.

“Hopper!”

He didn’t turn.

She let out a vexed growl as, again, the Chief continued on, walking with purposeful, long strides. Clearly blanking her.

“Hopper, would you just slow down for one moment!” Her shorter legs struggled to keep up with him as he powered on.

“Not now, Joyce!” His voice thundered as she reached for his hand. He batted her away.

“James Hopper, you listen to me right now.”

He stopped abruptly at her sudden usage of his full name. He was breathing heavily and, if looks could kill, Joyce would be dead right now.

He stood there, waiting for her to speak, his nostrils flared like an enraged bull.

“What the fuck is going on Hop! You come to the house all cheerful, you invite us to a party, and then all of a sudden you go AWOL on me. No calls. Hell, you don’t even look at me!” He crossed his arms, the fire dying down slightly, as he sighed. She stepped towards him.

“Did I do something to upset you?”

“No... no. It’s nothing.” He rubbed the back of his neck out of habit, his eyes refusing to meet hers.

“Oh don’t give me that shit, something is *definitely* up with you. Just because Bob is my boyfriend now you think you can act like you did back in Senior year?”

“I didn’t say that, why are you bringing him into this?” Hopper glowered.

“Well, it’s not like you’re the biggest fan of him.” She stepped forward, finger now pointed in frustration.

“Bob? That schmuck is not-”

“Schmuck? That’s rich Hop, you’re not exactly the epitome of wisdom.” She swept a disgusted glance over him to exaggerate her point.

“-Glass houses, Joyce!”

“What?”

“You know, pot calling the kettle black and all that.” He smirked, sarcastically raising an eyebrow.

“Oh, come on,” She rolled her eyes, “You are such a big man-child sometimes!”

This argument was going nowhere.

“Uh, it looks like I’m gonna have to take a rain check on this conversation.” He lifted up his wrist, tapping an imaginary watch, and shrugging childishly.

“Nuh-uh mister, you aren’t getting out of this that easily.” She grabbed his bicep to stop him from leaving, admiring the hard muscle under his uniform.

“Can I remind you that I am the Chief of Police-”

“Can I remind YOU that I am sick of your shit and you not talking to me!” She emphasised her words by prodding him in the chest, her brown eyes staring up into his with a stern intensity. They had moved very close to one another at this point, so much so that Hoppers’ belt was brushing against her arm.

“Jesus Christ, Joyce, I’m talking to you now aren’t I?”

“Yeah, but that’s not the point.” She withdrew her hand from his arm to rub her eyes. She was overworked, over-stressed, and just about done with him now.

“Well, what do you want me to damn say!” He huffed, exasperated.

“I just... I want you to just be open with me. Stop running and just tell me what your... problem is.”

“I don’t *have* a problem, you’re just making it seem like there is one.” He sighed again, throwing his arms up in frustration and letting out a bark of laughter at how absurd the conversation had become.

“Stop making noises, it’s annoying.”

“I did not make a noise-”

“You did.”

“-What is it with YOU and noises?”

They were at each other’s necks.

Chief, you there? Hopper’s walkie-talkie buzzed, the muffled voice of Flo interrupting their incessant bickering.

“Saved by the bell.” Joyce sneered.

He rolled his eyes, unhinging the pager from his waist. Joyce noticed a pang of sadness that went through her as he turned away, responding to Flo’s call, without a final word. Why was he like this? She shook her head, heading back to the shop. She hoped things would just get back to normal, she was sick of the chaos, sick of the problems life kept throwing at her.

If Hopper was gonna act like a prepubescent then she wasn't going to follow him around like a puppy, trying to please him. Worrying her bottom lip, she resumed her position at the till. It was Friday, meaning the party would be the following night. Realising she had yet to tell Bob, she dialled his number with the telephone to the left of her desk and waited for him to answer.

2. Hungry Eyes

Notes for the Chapter:

I got this one done as quickly as possible and hopefully the final chapter will be out in the same speed. The next chapter will also earn this fic it's mature rating ;)

As always, comments and kudos are appreciated.

Hope you enjoy!

*(I've got this feelin' that won't subside,
I look at you and I fantasize...
You're mine tonight.) - Eric Carmen*

Saturday - The day of the party

“You look gorgeous, love.”

“You think?”

Bob eyed the dress Joyce had picked out appreciatively. It wasn't anything too extravagant, she was a modest woman at the best of times, but that day she was feeling spontaneous and, with the aid of light inebriation from an early-afternoon cocktail, she had opted to go for a garment that showed a little more skin than she'd usually display. It was quite a sexy number, one that curved in all the right places; accentuating her breasts, hips, and bum, and thinning her waist. The deep blue velvet that it was made from contrasted beautifully with her natural skin colour, and the subtle black lace around the sleeves made her eyes look deeper than she thought was physically possible. There was a slit running up the left side that exposed her upper thigh in a tempting manner, and the open back dipped slightly lower than Joyce would've liked - though Bob assured her it was fine.

“Goodness, I'll be the envy of the party!” He had exclaimed when she

first walked out of the changing room to get his opinion. She mentally scolded herself as she instantly wondered what Hopper's reaction would be.

"You're not wrong." She scoffed at just how right he was.

"Might have to step up my game!"

"Flatterer." She teased, slapping him lightly on the arm.

"I'm just one lucky guy, that's all." He chuckled, standing and pulling her in for a kiss on the cheek. She accepted him readily, however, almost out of the blue, a strange feeling passed over her as she felt his lips press to her skin. It was an unpleasant feeling, similar to how one might react to nails on a chalk-board, and it brought goosebumps to the back of her neck. It confused Joyce, but she reciprocated the embrace and re-entered the changing room to get back into her casual clothes.

There was a mirror hanging on the left wall of the small room. She took a moment to herself, once hidden behind the curtain, to rub her eyes and process the emotions running through her head. Why was she having so many opposing thoughts? One moment the idea of spending the rest of her life with Bob was like a dream come true and the next moment she could barely stand giving him a hug. So strange. She needed a smoke.

Wriggling out of the tight dress and neatly folding it for purchase, she composed herself, taking a deep breath and stepping back into her work jeans. She was not particularly looking forward to the mental challenges that that evening would procure. Hopper would likely still be acting like an imbecile and she already could tell that the tension between the two men would become even more apparent as the night went on. Bob would never act on anything, but he clearly was aware of her and the Chief's history, and he surely was not keen on Joyce spending a lot of time alone with him.

Eyeing her face in the mirror she sighed. She looked exhausted, though still considerably beautiful, there was no mistaking the weight of her past that was evidenced through the small details; the light wrinkles coming in around her eyes and the stray grey roots in her hair. Supposedly, stress was a large contributing factor to the

ageing process and the last year had definitely not helped towards that.

Bob disrupted her thoughts.

“You alright in there, love?”

“Yes, yeah... sorry.”

Hopper sat on his porch, cigarette in one hand and whiskey in the other.

Christ, he needed to move on from this; this twisting anger and envy. Joyce had picked Bob because he was nice and dependable and all sorts of other stupid words ending in able. Whereas Jim Hopper was a mess, a guy who would rather have an argument than say what he actually felt. No wonder she dated Bob Newby, he was easy to be around. He was a mercurial, hot-tempered, jealous son of a bitch. Then why did he still cling onto this foolish hope of a fairy tale ending, if he was miserable by nature? Why did he always try to find some way to reach out and touch her, or catch himself staring at her with an expression that would, in all other circumstances make him retch with derision?

Was he obsessed with her? Did he have some kind of complex that had gone undiagnosed?

Hopper pushed the tips of his fingers into the sockets of his eyes, trying to massage away the tension headache he seemed to suffer from regularly nowadays. Perhaps if things had been different when they were in high school, if she hadn’t dumped him unceremoniously for Lonnie Byers, maybe he would feel like their relationship was finished business and he could move on with his life.

He too was not looking forward to that evening. Having to watch Joyce on the arm of that fool was enough to make any man annoyed, and it would be worse this time; she’d be dressed up, there would be others around. He’d be delegated to wear a facade of a smile and pretend like he wasn’t dying to take her home and make her his.

It was moderately late in the day, nearing dusk, and, as Hopper began to get into his dark-navy suit, he mentally prepared himself. "Bastard cufflinks." he murmured to no-one in particular; fiddling with his sleeves and readjusting his tie pin. Flo had suggested it be a very formal party, as the townspeople rarely had any occasions to dress up nicely. Hopper took this in stride, deciding to drive out of Hawkins to buy the nicest suit he could find in a neighbouring city, splashing out a little more than he probably should've.

As he caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror he did a small double-take. The price tag was worth it. He looked good.

He planned to get to the party slightly earlier than most to "help out" though that really meant he just wanted to get tipsy before Joyce arrived. A sober Hopper was a grumpy Hopper and he wanted to enjoy the night, not waste it lusting after a taken woman. "Just stay away from her," he told himself, "circulate the perimeter, stay in the shadows, mingle with colleagues".

This was going to be an interesting evening...

A pleasant hum of activity filled the Hawkins Police Precinct. Christmas music echoed throughout the room and the smell of oven baked goods mixed pleasantly with the wide array of perfumes and colognes emanating from the people already dancing in the centre of the space. Whilst it was definitely a fancy event, that didn't stop residents from acting like their usual selves, writhing against one another and chanting along to any songs that came on - despite not knowing the words. All of the kids were there too, donning tinsel and goofy santa hats, occasionally stealing mince pies from the food table before running off to lark about outside. Joyce didn't think she'd ever seen the station so full as it was now. Almost everyone from Hawkins, except perhaps a few of the older residents, were there, and it was quite a tight fit.

She was just happy to be able to finally let her hair down. Nancy and Jonathan had promised to look after all the youngsters, so she really had nothing to think about. Except Hopper. She had spotted him earlier when she first arrived, but she hadn't seen him since.

The Wheelers and her had come all together - she had gone to Karen's get ready for the party, letting Bob drive the kids over - and

they now stood on the outskirts of the mass of people.

“Well *this* is a lot larger than I expected!” Karen shouted over the music.

“You can say that again! I think I just saw Chrissy Carpenter walk by.” They laughed at the enjoyable chaos.

“I think we need to get involved with some of this dancing, don’t you dear?” Ted halfheartedly nodded, allowing his wife to lead him by the hand.

“You going to join us?” Karen called back.

“Nah, I think I’ll get a drink first and find Bob.” They nodded and began to leave before she realised she didn’t actually know where either of her children were.

“Ted!” Joyce struggled to catch his attention as Karen dragged him away, “Have you seen Will?”

“Pretty sure he is in the parking lot, lighting off fireworks with the rest of his buddies. I think I saw Jonathan there too, but it’s quite dark out, I could be wrong.” He gave her a pleasant smile before he was lost within the crowd. That was good. If he saw Will then the others would be around somewhere too.

Joyce scanned the dining room for her family, happening upon Jim sitting at a round table with Flo and some of his other workmates. He looked extremely handsome in the blue suit he wore, which she was confident was new, and his beard had been trimmed neatly. His shoulders were as hunched and tense as they had been when they argued the day before, and he was sipping what appeared to be a whisky on the rocks, his gaze fixed on an unknown spot off to the side and not on Flo - who was describing her first car animatedly. He sensed her presence, looking up directly at her with a stern regard. God he looked good.

She wasn’t sure of where they stood in their friendship at that moment, though she realised she probably should stop thinking about him like that. His eyes were unmoving and making her feel quite

uncomfortable, but fortunately Bob's hand on her waist came at the perfect time - breaking the silent stand still and shaking her from her thoughts.

"Hey Joycie, you ok?" He planted a kiss on her cheek as he squeezed her upper arm affectionately.

"Yeah, I was just about to go get us some drinks! What would you like?" She brought a hand to cup his cheek.

"Oo, a glass of Champagne please, love."

"Right, I'll be back in a moment."

Joyce meandered her way through the dense crowd towards the makeshift bar, where it was slightly quieter. Ordering two glasses and sliding the money across to the female bartender who she thought she'd seen waitressing at Enzo's in the past.

As she waited for the drinks to be poured she felt someone come up next to her. She could already tell it was Hopper.

"You look stunning this evening." His soft timbre was only just audible over the music. He looked quite sheepish as he approached her.

"Oh, so we are on speaking terms now?" Crossing her arms, she turned slowly - an eyebrow raised in suspicion.

"Well that's better than the silence."

"Last I checked you were the one doing the ghosting."

"Goddamnit Joyce, can't you see I'm tryna rectify that?" He huffed. She swept her eyes over him, taking in his full appearance. Obviously she must've missed him going to the gym, as she was suddenly struck by just how strong his arms were - and how the shirt he wore hugged his broad chest attractively.

"You still haven't told me why you've been ignoring me."

"It's... complicated. I can't say I even know myself. Just... lot's of confusing things whizzing about my brain, that's all." He sighed,

rubbing his hands together out of nervous habit.

"I get it, it's not been easy for either of us. But don't think you can get away with being a *jerk for the last week, you owe me, Mister!*" She frowned comically.

"I'll do whatever you like, scouts honor." Sucking in his bottom lip, he raised three fingers in a salute. She rolled her eyes. The waitress promptly handed her the two drinks she ordered and she eagerly took a large gulp, groaning at its pleasant flavour. She was practically parched from the heat of the room and the burgeoning closeness between her and the Chief.

"If you were wearing your uniform right now you'd look like an actual boy-scout."

He chuckled. "How can I make it up to you then? A dance?"

"Well, definitely not until I get these damn heels off... they're killing my feet." She rubbed at her ankles. She wasn't sure she wanted to have a dance with Hopper, it might only drag up distant memories from their youth; their senior prom and the romantic kiss they shared in the school parking lot - and she was sure Bob would prefer to have her to himself.

"They look great, at least finally you are the height of a *normal* human being." He teased, rubbing his fingers through his stubble as he watched her intently. She clutched her chest in mock offence, slapping his forearm.

"You look good too, Hop." She gave him a toothy smile, happy that their former friendship was falling back into place again. "When did you start working out?"

"You noticed?" He smirked down at her. Puffing out his chest.

"Shut up." She rolled her eyes, flapping a hand in his general direction, and reciprocated the smirk. He leant one arm up against the countertop, resting his head on his palm, and eyed her appreciatively. Edging closer to him, she swept her hair over her

shoulder. To anyone watching, they would've looked like an ordinary couple shooting flirtatious comments and making goo-goo eyes, as opposed to two life-long friends who had only just started talking to one another again.

"Where's Bob?" He teased.

"Somewhere on the dance floor, I'm guessing. Where's YOUR date?"

"Not exactly had much time for dating."

"Half of all the women in Hawkins would disagree with that." She shot back.

"What?"

"Oh *c'mon*... you're seriously pretending like you haven't shagged most of the women here?" She raised her eyebrows again.

"Someone sounds *jealous*." Eyes glistening with humour, he scooted forward imperceptibly.

Quite aptly the song that was currently playing ended and the crooning, sultry intro to Marvin Gaye's "Let's get it on" began to play. Joyce whipped her head towards the stereo in the corner where she noticed Karen had changed the music. She was giggling at them and winked when she saw that they had seen her.

"*Oh my god.*" Joyce held her head in her hands, a fierce blush sweeping over her cheeks. Hopper looked just as embarrassed, though he was laughing. She hoped Bob wasn't aware of the music change being related to her. Trust Karen to time it almost perfectly.

"Oh, I love this song!" Bob appeared from almost nowhere, rejoining her and taking the second drink from where it sat on the counter, oblivious to the flirting that had just gone on between the two. "Want a dance, Joycie?" He suggested sweetly. Hopper had swiftly scooted away and was now lost in his own thoughts. She nodded, placing their half drunken glasses on the side, letting Bob pull her into the throng.

The music volume was turned up by one of the teens and the pair

danced for a while.

At one point the rest of the party allowed Ted and Karen, who were celebrating their 8th anniversary, to have the entire floor to themselves to dance to “You can’t hurry love” by The Supremes for a few moments for photography’s sake before everyone else joined them. Joyce had not had an occasion to dance in years, but she did not feel uncomfortable at all, following Bob’s slightly awkward but patient lead. She could feel the jealousy emanating from Hopper, which she revelled in, so she pulled Bob closer – casting her eyes to where the Chief stood leaning against the bar, catching his glower. She made sure she smiled a little more than she usually did and laughed a little louder. Something in the way Jim stared – that thin-lipped mask of lust – caused a pleasant heat to radiate from Joyce’s scalp down to her toes and back up to rest at the very core of her being. To which; she was very – extremely – turned on. She’d never say it out loud, but the thrill of being wanted was something she enjoyed greatly and she was gonna milk that moment for all it was worth.

3. Upside Down

Notes for the Chapter:

Well, this is the final chapter! Hope you guys enjoy....

Please leave kudos and comments if you do :)

*(I know you got charm and appeal,
You always play the field,
I'm crazy to think you are mine.
As long as the sun continues to shine,
There's a place in my heart for you
That's the bottom line.) - Diana Ross*

The evening continues...

“Attention everyone!”

The Mayor of Hawkins, who was getting quite doddery, had gotten up onto an apple crate in an attempt to make a short speech, unsuccessfully, as the music was drowning him out. He had been given a microphone... which didn't seem to be working; however, after giving a sharp glare to the man running the Hi-fi system, the music was finally turned down and he was able to speak.

“As you all know, a party of this size isn't a normal occurrence here in this town, but I just wanted to take a moment to thank all the people who organised it and I'd also like to make a small announcement.”

There were murmurs of excitement within the crowd. The kids had come in from larking about outside and were leant against the wall on the farthest side of the room. Joyce spotted Will, from where she was standing with Bob, and gave him a little wave, blowing him a kiss when he noticed, and embarrassing him when Dustin began teasing him for returning one. She also noticed Jonathan and Nancy

stood in the corner, hands held tightly together in a romantic embrace. She warmed inwardly at the sight of her sons finally at peace - enjoying themselves.

“Firstly, let’s give a round of applause to Flo for all the set-up she did in this room... I mean, it looks great, doesn’t it?” There was lots of clapping, whistles and cheering, Flo was hugged and high-fived, blushing profusely and shaking her head in humbleness. Someone somewhere let off a party popper and all the kids began to join in, letting off their own ones .

“Next, I’d like to congratulate Karen and Ted on their 8th anniversary! We didn’t think it would get this far if I’m honest.” He joked, winking at the couple.

There was laughter, more poppers and more applause.

“And finally... Joyce Buyers, where is she?” His beady eyes scanned the room. “Ah, there she is. Joyce, come up here, dear.”

Joyce was shocked. This had been sprung upon her, she had no idea what was going on. She first looked at Bob, gauging his reaction to see if he had any idea what was happening, then Hopper. Both men seemed just as clueless as she did - or maybe they were just faking ignorance, she couldn’t tell - so, gingerly, she pushed her way to the front of the crowd to stand next to the Mayor, her hands idly toying with her dress. The Mayor wrapped his arm around her shoulder and looked sincerely into her eyes.

“So, as I’m sure you’re sick of hearing, we know you and your family have recently had a... troublesome year... and we, as a town, thought you deserved a nice break. Therefore, collectively, we have all decided that we want to treat you to something special.” The crowd ‘oohed’ pantomimically, pretending like they didn’t already know what was coming. She eyed Bob whose eyes were now gleaming with mischievous delight, Hopper on the other hand still looked befuddled.

“Here, in my back pocket-” He withdrew an envelope, “ -I have four plane tickets to New York.”

Joyce gasped.

“For you to take yourself, and your family of course, on a nice little holiday, to get away from all this for a bit.”

Everyone was smiling up at her expectantly but she had no idea how to react, clasping her hands over her mouth in shock.

“I... uh, um... thank you!” She stuttered into the mic. “I can’t thank you all enough, really.”

She looked over to Will, Bob and Jonathan who seemed similarly astounded and excited. There was a final round of applause and she was let off the stage, flipping the envelope over in her hands. A large smile was plastered on her face as she made her way to the group of them. Will and Jonathan attacked her with a massive hug, shouting positives into her ear that she couldn’t hear over the music that had been turned up again. Bob kissed the top of her head, and then her cheek, his eyes bright with joy. She just couldn’t believe what they had done for her.

“You OK love?”

“I’m... lost for words.”

“Haha, not surprised.” He chuckled lightly, squeezing her hand.

“Did you organise this?” She shouted to Bob.

“Partially, it was mainly the Chiefs’ idea actually, but we all contributed towards the tickets!”

“Oh..” Breathlessly, Joyce scoured the room for Jim but he was nowhere to be seen. She frowned. They had just been finally hitting it off again - back to their normal selves - and now he seemed to be back to running away. Brushing it off, she assumed he might’ve just gone outside for a fag. The boys scampered off, rejoining the now busy dance floor again. She spotted Lucas and Dustin dancing with Will.

“Well, now that we’ve got that surprise out of the way... I think it’s time for mine.”

Her head swivelled violently towards Bob, who was staring at her sincerely with big doe eyes. Two surprises in one night?

“What is it?” She nodded, gulping.

“Joycie, I know the whole Will thing has only just finally settled... and I know that you have been getting to grips with normal life,” He looked to the floor, speaking as slowly and carefully as possible in such a noisy place, “But I was thinking; wouldn’t it just be nice for a change of scenery entirely?”

“I mean, New York is a pretty big change of scenery if you ask me.”

He chuckled.

“Yeah, I know, but maybe something more permanent? Like... *after* New York.”

“How do you mean?” She couldn’t tell if he was saying what she thought he was saying.

“Uh, so the other month, my brother who lives in south Ohio moved out of his home and bought a new one in Michigan... but he’s looking to rent it out to someone and I kinda thought... maybe-”

“Bob.” She knew what he was insinuating but she let him confirm her thoughts.

“-Maybe you and the boys would like to move out there with me?”

He looked up at her carefully, gingerly smiling.

Joyce felt like she was sinking. She was overwhelmed and the music was not helping at all. Thoughts whirled around her head; *“How would they afford it?”*, *“When would they leave?”*, *“How would Hopper react?”*, *“Why now!?”*

“I need some air.” She shook her hand from his grasp and began backing away. Her breathing was growing short and she needed some fresh air, away from prying eyes and the stresses that were flooding into her mind.

“Joycie!” Bob called after her.

“Don't worry, Bob, I need a moment to process everything, but just...
Please don't follow me.”

She fled from the room.

The brick of the alleyway was damp against her palms as she leant against it. When she had finally managed to escape the party, she had looked for the nearest back-door possible, which happened to lead her out towards the rear of the station - near where most people's cars were parked. It was extremely dark, cold and the secluded section of the side street she now stood in was quite a small space; full of wet cardboard boxes and other disposed items that she paid no attention to. Her eyes were closed as she attempted to control her breathing. But they shot open when he spoke.

“What you doing out here, Horowitz?”

His intimidating figure, which she hadn't noticed until he voiced his presence, was outlined with a harsh light from the distant street lamp, though she could see the smoke rise up above his head and the faint glow of the tip of his cigarette lit his eyes up partially.

“I... needed a moment.”

“What, is Wham not really your thing?” He joked, the corner of his mouth raising into a Hopperish smirk.

She snorted, a plume of condensation flowing from her mouth into the cold night air. The distant beat of the music was a comforting sound, lulling the two of them into a calm state.

“You'll catch your death if you're not careful.” He continued, nodding towards her scantily clad arms and legs.

“Warmth isn't really my top priority right now.”

She stretched out her hand, motioning towards the Malboro in his inner suit pocket.

“Thought you quit.” He teased, passing one to her slowly.

“Yeah, well it seems like we’re all falling back into bad habits, hm?”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

Taking a long drag of the nicotine she sighed. It was the first in four months and it was undeniably good. Ignoring his question she groaned.

“Hopper, I came out here for some peace and quiet.”

“Suit yourself.” He grumbled, leaning back against the wall similarly to her, his shoulder pressed up against hers. They stood in companionable silence for a while, as their cigarettes burned away and the night air became chillier. The alleyway was not the most comfortable of places to occupy, though the both of them were lost in thought and paid little attention to the dripping pipes.

“I can take you and the boys back home if you want.” Hopper suggested, though she could tell he wanted her to say no.

“It’s OK, I’m feeling better now. I think I need to sleep on it really.” She looked up at him through her eyelashes, a content smile on her face. He looked back down at her, which is when she realised just how close their faces had grown together.

“You have a right to be annoyed at me for ghosting you... heck, I’m mad at me too.” He chuckled.

“Hop, we’re past that now.” She spoke between puffs, dropping the butt of the fag to the ground. “I can’t pretend like I know everything that is going on in that big, stupid head of yours, but if the last twenty years has taught me anything it’s that you *always* have good intentions and you *always* put me first.”

He pushed off the wall and came to stand in front of her, blocking the cold air with solid, muscular warmth. His eyes were hard to see in the low lighting, but she could still make out the way they twinkled. She had always loved his eyes; the way they always projected exactly what he was thinking. His hand came up to stroke her cheek lovingly. Her breath hitched. This had not been what she was expecting.

“You have no idea what you do to me.” He said as she leant into his touch.

“Show me...”

She knew that she was damning her relationship with Bob at that moment. Poor Bob. He was so sweet, so kind, so understanding. He didn’t deserve all this; her indecisiveness, her inability to quell the ache for the Chief who she had always loved.

Love. That was a word she knew better than to throw about haphazardly. But as she felt Hopper’s lips come crashing down upon hers in a searing kiss she could tell that it was meant to be.

She brought her arms up around his strong shoulders, pulling him against her and returning the kiss fervorously. His hands roamed her thighs, his fingers weaving beneath the slit in her dress to cradle her arse and hike her up against the wall. He stood between her open legs, plundering one another’s mouths, roughly grinding against each other as if their life depended on it.

He pushed her dress higher until it bunched around her waist, swearing when he saw the suggestive lingerie - that had been originally intended for Bob - she wore underneath.

“Fucking Hell, Joyce you’ll be the death of me.” He breathed. She was about to compliment how stunning he looked in that moment, but was instantly rendered speechless at the feeling of his fingers slipping beneath the material of her panties and insinuating themselves within her. She moaned languidly, biting her lip to quell further noise.

“You need to be quiet...” He huffed out, his eyebrows pulled down into a frown of concentration as he worked at keeping her held against the wall and pleasuring her. She pulled him back into a deep kiss to muffle her gasps and began undoing his belt buckle with her free hands. It clinked and fell as she worked it open, her fingers shaking in an effort to pull him out of the confines of his boxers. He worked his digits in and out of her, his thumb rubbing circles on her clit, and his tongue possessing her mouth dominantly.

It was his turn to let out a deep, gravelly groan as she took his length in her hand. He was already half-hard and her ministrations were doing well to bring him to full mast. She massaged him, paying attention to rub her thumb across the head of his cock every few

strokes. Eliciting a pleasing sound from him, and an even more pleasing reaction as his arousal became more and more apparent.

“Joyce.” He huffed, surprised, rotating his hips into her grip.
“Joyce... maybe we should continue this someplace else.”

“No, I need you right now.” She sighed into his mouth. He was fully erect now. She could feel it, and her curiosity began to take over. Reaching out, she moved the flap of his pants to the side, just enough to give her room to pull his cock out. Hopper hummed, withdrawing his fingers from within her, and lifting his shirt up slightly so he could get a better view of her working him. She could see his lower abs and the muscles that carved a pathway to his groin. She stared at it, heated arousal pooling between her legs.

This was bad, she thought.

The kind of things she was thinking about doing to his body ... it ... she couldn't. They were friends, only friends, that much he had made apparent. But friends didn't do this did they?

He let go of a soft moan again, his hips crashing into her palm. She was barely doing anything now, but keeping her pressure firm as his hips rolled in and out of her spread fingers. He looked up, pulling a hand to cradle the side of her face.

“I want to be inside you.” He let out breathily, his forehead coming to rest against hers. The faint music from the party continued to play as she nodded hastily, readjusting herself in his grasp and lifting her leg slightly higher to give him easier access. He took himself in hand, roughly pulling the material of her panties to one side, and began stroking his tip up and down her folds in a teasing manner; before pushing slowly into her.

She threw her head back against the wall and her mouth opened in a silent scream as he stretched her. The sound of her panting filled the close confines of the alleyway, mingling with Hopper's equally harsh breathing. She was distantly aware of his belt buckle digging into her left thigh, but she didn't focus on it. She couldn't. All she could focus on was him as he began pumping in and out of her in long, languid thrusts. Anyone could've driven by and seen them but Joyce didn't

care because her body was on fire and Hopper had whispered something filthy in her ear and it was frantic sex; hard and quick and dirty. It felt so damn good.

“You have no idea how long I’ve waited for this.” He growled into her ear, his hips working her higher, and higher up against the wall as his dick delved deeper into her.

They continued for what felt like hours, though Joyce could tell it was truly only a matter of minutes. The sound of their skin slapping against one another filled the back-street. Sweat slicked her skin and Hopper’s thumb started rubbing circles over her. She was so close.

“Tell me you’re close,” Hopper gasped. His voice was strangled, and even through the haze of a building orgasm, Joyce grinned. She could tell he was only asking because he was close. He had been waiting to get with her for so long, and now that he was finally getting it, he was struggling to last.

“Yeah...”

She adjusted the pace of her hips to a rhythm that usually made other men she’d been with roll their eyes back in their head, and triumph coursed through her veins when he swore.

It was short lived, though, because the new rhythm was also making her eyes roll too. She was not going to last much longer.

“Come on, Hop,” she panted. “Let go for me.”

He growled at her, and then the pressure of his thumb between her legs changed. The speed changed too, and the rhythm of Joyce’s hips stuttered because holy shit, how fast is his thumb moving? He feels more like a vibrator than a man and her body is...

“Fuck,” she gasped.

Hopper’s tongue trailed obscenely up the column of her throat. He grinned into her pulsepoint.

“Feel good?” he whispered.

Joyce choked on a yes and dug her nails into his shoulder. This was going to wreck her.

“Come for me, Joyce,” Hopper huffed into her skin. The sound of her first name on his lips was like pulling a trigger. The orgasm hit and she was gone, her head thrown back again and his name on her lips as the world went white hot. Hopper was close behind her, his thrusts becoming rapid and messy. He let out a cry of pleasure as he finished inside her.

Their combined breathing was heavy. So heavy, in fact, that neither of them had noticed Bob - who had come outside looking for Joyce - stood watching the two come down from their high.

“Joyce...” His voice was solemn and flat.

The two of their heads whipped up towards his speech.

“*Goddamn.*” Hopper murmured.